

INTERIM STATEMENT BY NIGERIA CIVIL SOCIETY SITUATION ROOM ON THE OCTOBER 10, 2020 ONDO STATE GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION

Issued in Akure: 3:10pm, Saturday, 10th October, 2020

The Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room has been observing closely the ongoing Governorship Election in Ondo State, Saturday, October 10, 2020. The following are our observations:

LOGISTICS AND OPENING OF POLLS

Reports from our network of observers across the 18 LGAs in the State indicate both voting materials and electoral officials arrived early in most polling units while opening of polls commenced at an average time of 8.30am in the polling units observed. However, there were a few reported hitches in the arrival of materials and officials notably in Lipaye, PU 004, ward 6, Ondo West where electoral officials arrived at 11.15am. There were also reported cases of malfunctioning of smart card readers in some polling units visited. These were in PUs-001, 006, 011, and 019 in ward 02, Akure South. Of particular interest was the situation at PU-023, ward 007, Idiagba, Akure South LGA where out of 148 accredited voters, only 11 of them were successfully authenticated by the card readers while 137 failed the finger print authentication but were however allowed to vote.

COMPLIANCE WITH COVID-19 PROTOCOLS

Situation Room observers noticed poor adherence to the laid down INEC guidelines on COVID-19 on election. For instance, while INEC made adequate provision for hand sanitizers and infra-red thermometers which were used in the polling units visited. However, there was a breach in the adherence to the social distancing principle of the protocol while in many instances, voters were seen not putting on their face masks.

CONDUCT OF SECURITY OFFICIALS

Situation Room observed the presence of security officials in the polling units visited, and major roads/intersections across the State. The conduct of security operatives has been courteous and professional so far. We commend the prompt response of security officials in intervening in the violent uproar recorded at Ijumo, PU-004, ward 4, Akure South where a PDP loyalist was shot by an APC thug by rushing the victim to the hospital as well as arresting the suspect.

VOTE BUYING

Situation Room noticed with dismay the continuous cases of vote trading among frontline political parties in the polling units observed. There were reported incidences of vote buying in PU-004, ward 1, Ondo East LGA; and Only Jesus Can Save, ward 5, Akure South LGA where voters were seen selling their votes in exchange for cash ranging from five to seven thousand naira depending on the purchasing power of the political party.

FAKE NEWS

Situation Room also noticed that there were quite a number of fake reports on Social Media. The report of the Zenith Labour Party (ZLP) candidate pulling out of the race is an example of one of such fake news.

CONCLUSION

As election enters the critical stage of vote collation, announcement and uploading of results on the INEC's viewing portal, Situation Room urges all stakeholders to continue to conduct themselves peacefully to ensure the conducive atmosphere recorded so far is sustained. We further call on the security operatives to be vigilant in mitigating incidences of electoral violence which normally characterizes the collation process. INEC should ensure the remaining phases of the election process proceeds in a transparent manner.

SIGNED:

Esther Uzoma

Alternate Chair

For: Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room

The Situation Room is made up of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working in support of credible and transparent elections in Nigeria and includes such groups as Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), CLEEN Foundation, Action Aid Nigeria, Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Proactive Gender Initiative (PGI), Centre for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD), Nigerian Women Trust Fund (NUTF), CITAD, Enough is Enough Nigeria, WANGONET, Partners for Electoral Reform, JDPC, New Initiative for Social Development and Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth & Advancement (YIAGA). Others are Development Dynamics, Stakeholder Democracy Network, Human Rights Monitor, Reclaim Naija, Alliance for Credible Elections (ACE), CISLAC, The Conscience for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution (CHRCR), Young Innovators and Vocational Training Initiative, EdoCSOs, CONGOs Edo State, Brave Heart Initiative, LAPDO, Partners West Africa and several other CSOs numbering more than seventy.

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